

An encounter with Chambolle is “a great reckoning in a little room”. One is presented with a level of differentiation and particularity such that over familiarity with its beauty might make one look upon all other wines with despair. Basic choices present themselves. One questions the world of things, and a retreat to Plato’s cave seems best, especially if its filled with Chambolle. Pretend wine-enthusiasts muck about with crude cliches of transcendence and the etherial. But a real Chambol-loise knows that no less than Bach, Homeric simile and Baroque allegory can transcribe, and at best poorly, Chambolle’s inner go. “Elegance” here is little more than semi-pro, sandbox wine copy. Chambolle, expressed through language, must be poetry; and its form is key.



If great wines from Piedmont and Burgundy have a psychology, Chambolle has Gestalt. Aesthetic form is bodied forth with an almost Hegelian significance. And I think Edna St. Vincent Millay gets close here:

Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare.
 Let all who prate of Beauty hold their peace,
 And lay them prone upon the earth and cease
 To ponder on themselves, the while they stare
 At nothing, intricately drawn nowhere

In shapes of shifting lineage; let geese
 Gabble and hiss, but heroes seek release
 From dusty bondage into luminous air.
 O blinding hour, O holy, terrible day,
 When first the shaft into his vision shone
 Of light anatomized! Euclid alone
 Has looked on Beauty bare. Fortunate they
 Who, though once only and then but far away,
 Have heard her massive sandal set on stone.

Perhaps massive in the sense of artistic importance, not of size. It is that which is truly there yet not fully perceived by most. The wines force one to abandon the crude tools of the professional wine industry worker for something far more rarefied. Some dramatic unseen jesture is more suited for the task of translation, like the gradual shifts in techtonic plates. The ideal beauty of the human body and the politics of a social being are more like the stuff that comes close to Chambolle’s import. The inf-fable visage shall not be rated or scored! Let us be clear on at least that point.

Gilbert and Christine Felettig are located in the center of Chambolle-Musigny. The brother and sister team took over vintifacation in 2000. The estate, however, was begun by their father Henri in the mid-1970s.

Over the years the Felettigs have invested wisely. Though they acquired very little acreage at just over 5 hectares in total, what small holdings they do have are, however, pedigree: .17 ha of 1er Cru Feusselottes, .34 ha 1er Cru Combottes, .25 ha. 1er Cru Charmes, and Echezeaux Grand Cru- .12 ha., to name a few.

They produce little wine from each parcel. Yet, beacuse the holdings are very small and spread out across different appellations, they are able to offer diverse expressions of terroir but with fewer opportunities (bottles) to enjoy. For example, Felettig produces less than 50 cases annually of Grand Echezeaux.

“But Gilbert and Christine also own and rent small parcels spread across the neighboring appellations just a few kilometers away. This allows them to offer an array of Burgundy’s top names: Vosne-Romanée, Gevrey-Chambertin, and Nuits-Saint-Georges. Felettig also produces stunning village wines both white and red: Hautes-Cotes de Beaune (white) and Hautes-Cotes de Nuits (red).

A tasting of these wines side by side offers a profound lesson in territories of beauty. The wines are crafted by the same hand, yet the nuances in the wines remain true reflections of the different vineyard characteristics. These shine through with terrific purity under Gilbert’s careful watch.

Although many improvements were made in the cellars in the last 10 years, the winemaking process remains traditionally Burgundian. In fact, these reds will greatly benefit from cellaring, as the wines present a structure worthy of their noble origins. “I don’t make wines to drink immediately, because we are lucky to have great appellations”, says Gilbert. “The wines are rich, dense and have an incredible potential”. He continues: “We suggest opening the wines a couple hours before serving to bring the most out of these incredibly seductive and deep wines”.

Although their 1er Cru Vosne-Romanée is farmed biodynamically with the assistance of their neighbor Louis-Michel Liger-Belair, the Felettigs are enlightened lutte raisonnée farmers. Sensitive work in the vineyards, promotion of microbial rich soils, and minimal coercion in the cellar deliver gorgeous, fine-boned Burgundies with an unmistakable sence of place.

SATYR PICKS

Gilbert did not undergo formal study to learn wine making. He learned in the vineyards and in the cellar. Gilbert is patient, soft spoken and sincere. His touch is gentle and his primary sources are delivering exceptional results.

Producer name: Gilbert and Christine Felettig
Age of Vine: Approximately 20-50+ years
Slope and exposure: South-east, 300 m.
Soil Types: Calcareous white marl
Vines per hectare: 10,000
Selection massale
Vine training system: Guyot and cordon de royal
Description of pruning: Pailissage avec 4 fils
Bunches per vine: 8
Green harvest: Yes
Growth between vines: Mouron and Senecon
Ploughing: Yes
Organic: Lutte raisonnee
Chemical treatments: None
Herbicides or pesticides: None
Copper, sulfur: A little of both and sexual confusion pheromone capsules
Hand harvested: Yes
Size of baskets: 30kgs
Selection of grapes is done in vineyard and at winery: Both
Destemming: 100%
Press: Pneumatic
Yeast type: Indigenous
Fermentation: Cold for 7 days
Maceration: 21 days
Submergence of cap: 1 to 2 times per day
Barrel type and size: 228 liters, French Oak. Sourced from the Tronçay and Bertranges forests. 2 to 3 year old oak barrels. Up to 50% new oak for 1er Cru and Grand Cru. 25% new for Village AC.

